

Message Text

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SUBJECT: INCIDENTS DIMINISH, POLEMICS FLARE IN AFTERMATH
OF "MILAN EVENTS"

REF: (A) ROME 5799; (B) ROME 6037

SUMMARY: SPORADIC OCCURRENCES OF EXTREMIST VIOLENCE CONTINUE FOLLOWING BLOODY INCIDENTS IN MANY CITIES TRIGGERED BY APRIL 16 FILLING OF STUDENT IN MILAN. LEFT-WING SEGMENTS OF MEDIA ATTRIBUTE RESPONSIBILITY OF RECENT VIOLENCE TO FAR RIGHT BUT BULK OF INCIDENTS CARRIED OUT BY EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY LEFT. VIOLENCE HAS SPARKED MASSIVE ANTI-FASCIST CAMPAIGN, SPEAR-HEADED BY LEFT BUT ACQUIESCED IN BY ALL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES. PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT HEIGHTENED BY LINKAGE TO A GENERAL STRIKE AND CELEBRATION OF THE ITALIAN LIBERATION DAY ANNIVERSARY APRIL 25. DISTURBANCES HAVE ALSO INCREASED PRESSURE FOR SPEEDY PASSAGE OF LAW AND ORDER LEGISLATION PENDING IN PARLIAMENT. THE COMMUNIST PARTY HAS SOUGHT TO DEVELOP ITS IMAGE AS A RESPONSIBLE PARTY READY TO COOPERATE WITH THE GOVERNMENT IN PRESERVING PUBLIC ORDER, BUT PCI IS NOW ISOLATED AS THE ONLY FORCE OPPOSING SPEEDY PASSAGE OF LAW AND ORDER LEGISLATION PENDING IN PARLIAMENT. END SUMMARY.

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1. SPORADIC INCIDENTS OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE HAVE OCCURRED

SINCE THE WIDESPREAD DISTURBANCES APRIL 16-19 IN THE WAKE OF THE SHOOTING IN MILAN OF A STUDENT MOVEMENT ACTIVIST BY A YOUNG RIGHT-WING EXTREMIST. (REF A). THE MAJORITY OF VIOLENT INCIDENTS WERE CAUSED BY GROUPS OF EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY LEFTISTS WHO ATTACKED OFFICES OF THE NEO-FASCIST MSI PARTY, CISNAL LABOR UNION, AND PRESUMED MSI ADHERENTS, IN A NUMBER OF CITIES. TWO OFFICES OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND THE PRINTING PLANT OF THE CENTRIST DAILY IL GIORNALE IN MILAN WERE ALSO ATTACKED. A COMMUNIST WORKER WAS KILLED IN FLORENCE ON APRIL 19 IN AN EXCHANGE OF GUN FIRE BETWEEN POLICE AND FORMER ADHERENT OF THE FAR LEFT "WORKERS POWER" FRINGE GROUP. SEVERAL PERSONS, INCLUDING THREE MSI ADHERENTS, AND TWO YOUTHS APPARENTLY ASSAULTED BECAUSE THEY WERE ERRONEOUSLY BELIEVED TO BE NEO-FASCISTS, WERE CRITICALLY INJURED DURING THESE ATTACKS.

2. THE LEFT-WING PARTIES, MAJOR LABOR ORGANIZATIONS AND MUCH OF THE MEDIA HAVE RESPONDED WITH A MASSIVE ANTI-FASCIST CAMPAIGN, LINKED TO A PREVIOUSLY PLANNED GENERAL STRIKE APRIL 22 (REF B) AND TO NATION-WIDE CELEBRATIONS OF ITALIAN LIBERATION DAY APRIL 25. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATS HAVE GONE ALONG WITH THIS ONE-SIDED CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE FAR RIGHT IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN THEIR ANTI-FASCIST CREDENTIALS. NOR HAS IT ESCAPED THEM THAT THE MORE THE NEO-FASCIST MSI IS DISCREDITED BY VIOLENCE ATTRIBUTED TO THE FAR RIGHT, THE MORE VOTES MAY FALL AWAY FROM IT INTO THE LAPS OF THE CENTER PARTIES.

3. THE COMMUNIST PARTY HAS REACTED WITH CAUTION AND A SHARPER THAN USUAL CONDEMNATION OF LEFTIST "PROVOCATEURS" WHO SEEK TO CREATE A "SPIRAL OF VIOLENCE". THE PCI WAS QUICK TO OBTAIN A MEETING WITH PREMIER MORO ON APRIL 18 TO DISCUSS THE LAW AND ORDER SITUATION, EVEN BEFORE THE PREMIER HELD CONSULTATIONS WITH THE TWO SMALLER CENTER-LEFT MAJORITY PARTIES (THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS). THE PCI THUS SOUGHT TO ENHANCE ITS NATIONAL IMAGE AS A RESPONSIBLE PARTY. THAT IMAGE, HOWEVER, IS NOW UNDER SHARP CHALLENGE BY THE MODERATE PARTIES BECAUSE OF PCI REFUSAL TO PERMIT ACCELERATED PARLIAMENTARY APPROVAL OF PENDING LAW AND ORDER LEGISLATION.

4. THE RECENT VIOLENCE HAS GIVEN INCREASED ELECTORAL AMMUNITION
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TO THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, BOTH OF WHOM HAVE BEEN PRESSING FOR SPEEDY PASSAGE IN PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSION OF LAW AND ORDER LEGISLATION. THE SOCIALISTS, (WHO IN PRIVATE RECENTLY HAVE EXPRESSED OPPOSITION TO PASSAGE OF THE PENDING LEGISLATION PRIOR TO THE JUNE 15 ELECTIONS) TOOK A PUBLIC STAND IN FAVOR OF ACCELERATED APPROVAL OF THE MEASURES FOLLOWING THE ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE COMMUNISTS THAT THE PCI WOULD DEMAND A FULL ASSEMBLY DEBATE ON THE SUBJECT. THUS THE

COMMUNISTS ARE ISOLATED IN THEIR OPPOSITION. MOST OBSERVERS
BELIEVE THAT THE PCI STANCE WILL DEALY PASSAGE OF THE LAW AND
ORDER LEGISLATION UNTIL AFTER THE JUNE REGIONAL ELECTIONS.

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